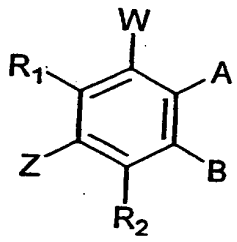
The claims defining the invention are as follows:

1. An isoflavone compound or analogue thereof of the general formula I:



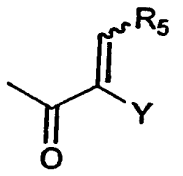
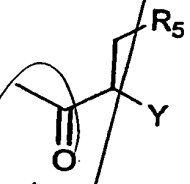
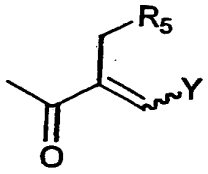
(I)

in which

R_1 and R_2 are independently hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_9, $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10}, $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo,

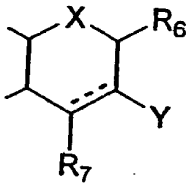
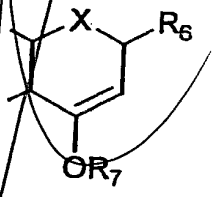
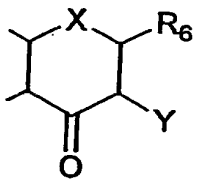
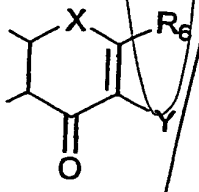
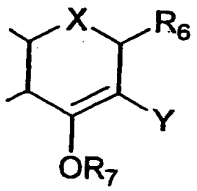
Z is hydrogen, and

W is R_1, A is hydrogen, hydroxy, NR_3R_4 or thio, and B is selected from

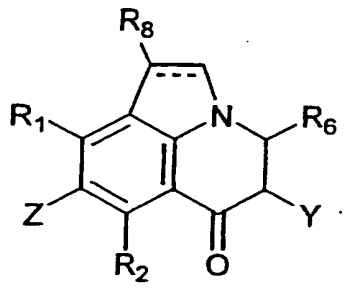
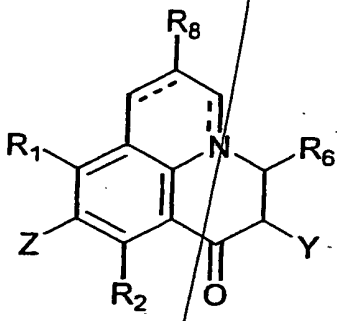
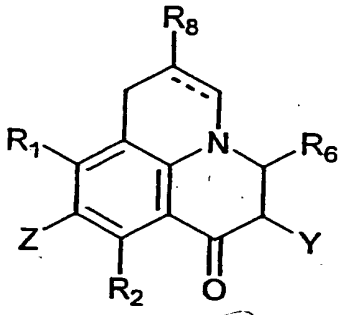
, or

W is R_1, and A and B taken together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a six-membered ring selected from

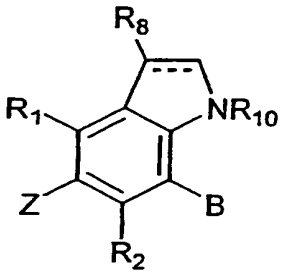
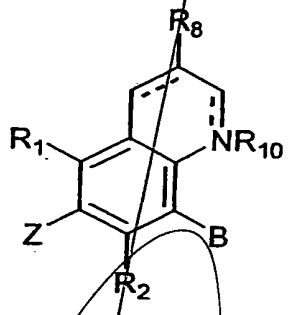
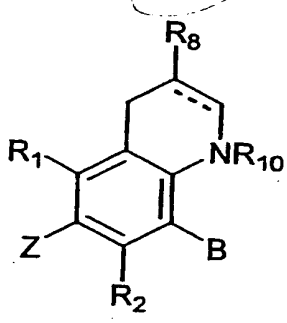
, or

W, A and B taken together with the groups to which they are associated comprise

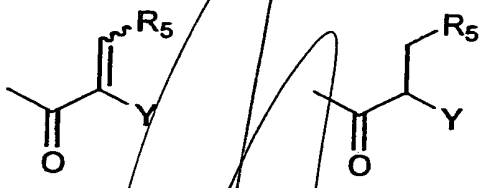
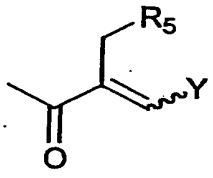




, or

W and A taken together with the groups to which they are associated comprise

and B is

wherein

R_3 is hydrogen, alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, an amino acid, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is hydrogen alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl or an amino acid, or CO_2R_{12} where R_{12} is hydrogen, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl or arylalkyl,

R_4 is hydrogen, alkyl or aryl,

or R_3 and R_4 taken together with the nitrogen to which they are attached comprise pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl,

R_5 is hydrogen, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is as previously defined, or CO_2R_{12} where R_{12} is as previously defined,

R_6 is hydrogen, hydroxy, alkyl, aryl, amino, thio, NR_3R_4, COR_{11} where R_{11} is as previously defined, CO_2R_{12} where R_{12} is as previously defined or $CONR_3R_4$,

R_7 is hydrogen, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is as previously defined, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl or $Si(R_{13})_3$ where each R_{13} is independently hydrogen, alkyl or aryl,

R_8 is hydrogen, hydroxy, alkoxy or alkyl,

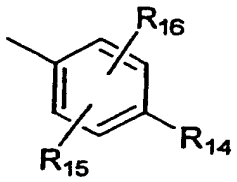
R_9 is alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is as previously defined, or $Si(R_{13})_3$ where R_{13} is as previously defined,

R_{10} is hydrogen, alkyl, haloalkyl, amino, aryl, arylalkyl, an amino acid, alkylamino or dialkylamino,

the drawing "---" represents either a single bond or a double bond,

X is O, NR_4 or S, and

Y is



wherein

R_{14}, R_{15} and R_{16} are independently hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_9, $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10}, $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo,

with the proviso that

when

R_1 is hydroxy, or $OC(O)R_A$ where R_A is alkyl or an amino acid, and

R_2 is hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_B where R_B is an amino acid or $C(O)R_A$ where R_A is as previously defined, and

W is hydrogen, then

Y is not 4-hydroxyphenyl or 4-alkylphenyl;

when

R_1 is hydroxy, or $OC(O)R_A$ where R_A is alkyl or an amino acid, and

R_2 is hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_B where R_B is an amino acid or $C(O)R_A$ where R_A is as previously defined, and

Y is 4-hydroxyphenyl or 4-alkylphenyl, then

W is not hydrogen;

when

R_1 is hydroxy, or $OC(O)R_A$ where R_A is alkyl or an amino acid, and

Y is 4-hydroxyphenyl or 4-alkylphenyl, and

W is hydrogen, then

R_2 is not hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_B where R_B is an amino acid or $C(O)R_A$ where R_A is as previously defined; and

when

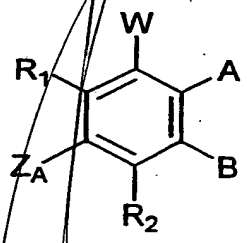
R_2 is hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_B where R_B is an amino acid or $C(O)R_A$ where R_A is as previously defined, and

Y is 4-hydroxyphenyl or 4-alkylphenyl, and

W is hydrogen, then

R_1 is not hydroxy, or $OC(O)R_A$ where R_A is alkyl or an amino acid.

2. An isoflavone compound or analogue thereof of the general formula II:



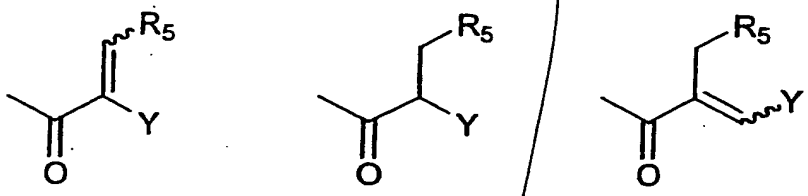
(II)

in which

R_1 and R_2 are independently hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_9, $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10}, $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo,

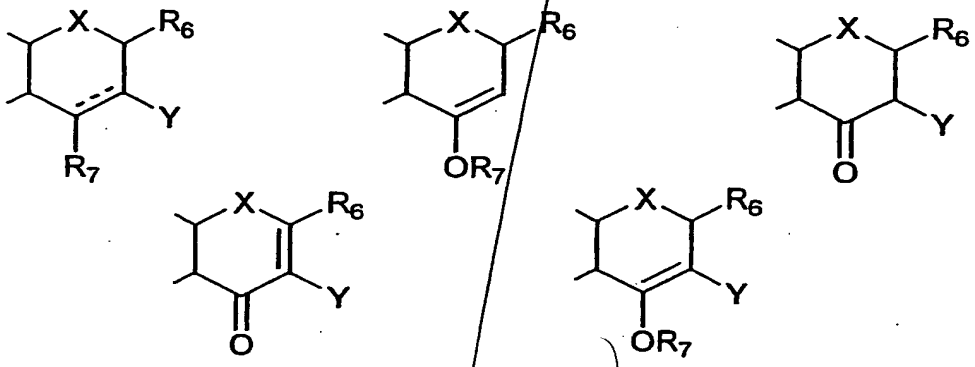
Z_A is OR_9, $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10}, $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo, and

W is R_1, A is hydrogen, hydroxy, NR_3R_4 or thio, and B is selected from



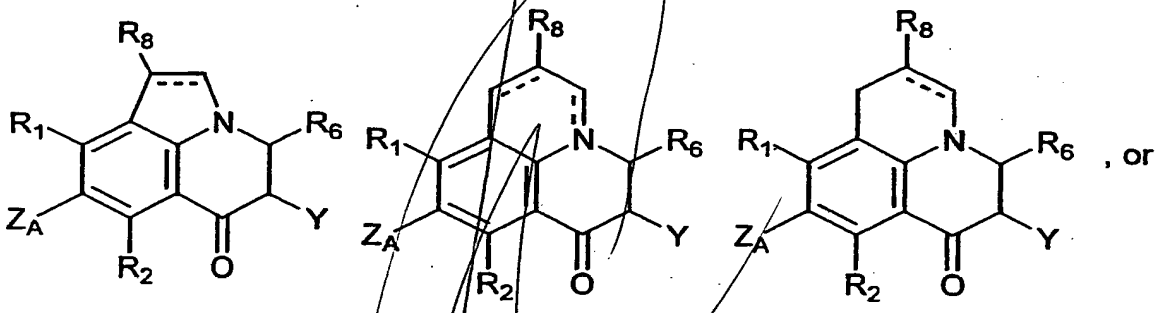
, or

W is R_1, and A and B taken together with the carbon atoms to which they are attached form a six-membered ring selected from



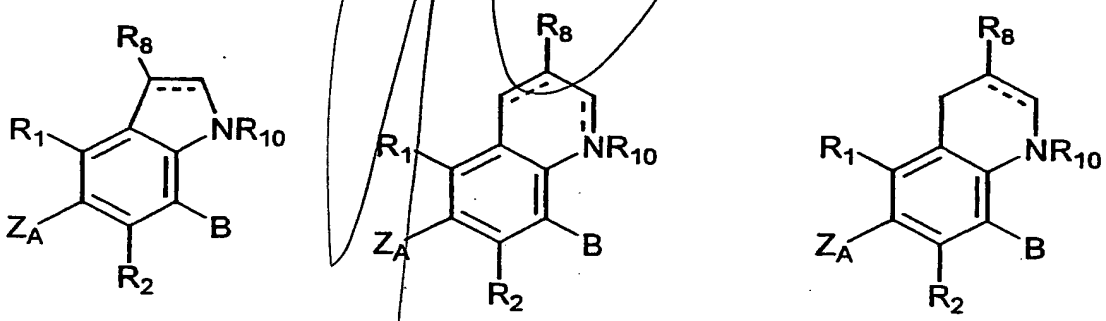
, or

W, A and B taken together with the groups to which they are associated comprise

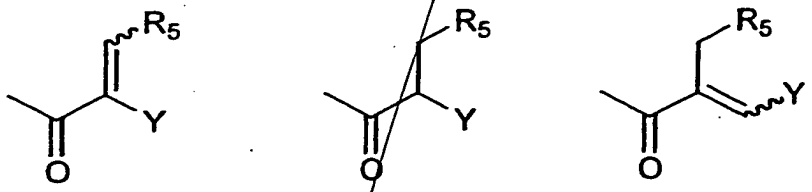


, or

W and A taken together with the groups to which they are associated comprise



and B is



wherein

R_3 is hydrogen, alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, an amino acid, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is hydrogen alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl or an amino acid, or CO_2R_{12} where R_{12} is hydrogen, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl or arylalkyl,

R_4 is hydrogen, alkyl or aryl,

or R_3 and R_4 taken together with the nitrogen which they are attached are pyrrolidinyl or piperidinyl,

R_5 is hydrogen, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is as previously defined, or CO_2R_{12} where R_{12} is as previously defined,

R_6 is hydrogen, hydroxy, alkyl, aryl, amino, thio, NR_3R_4, COR_{11} where R_{11} is as previously defined, CO_2R_{12} where R_{12} is as previously defined or $CONR_3R_4$,

R_7 is hydrogen, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is as previously defined, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl or $Si(R_{13})_3$ where each R_{13} is independently hydrogen, alkyl or aryl,

R_8 is hydrogen, hydroxy, alkoxy or alkyl,

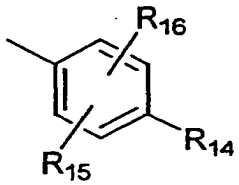
R_9 is alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, $C(O)R_{11}$ where R_{11} is as previously defined, or $Si(R_{13})_3$ where R_{13} is as previously defined,

R_{10} is hydrogen, alkyl, haloalkyl, amino, aryl, arylalkyl, an amino acid, alkylamino or dialkylamino,

the drawing "---" represents either a single bond or a double bond,

X is O, NR_4 or S, and

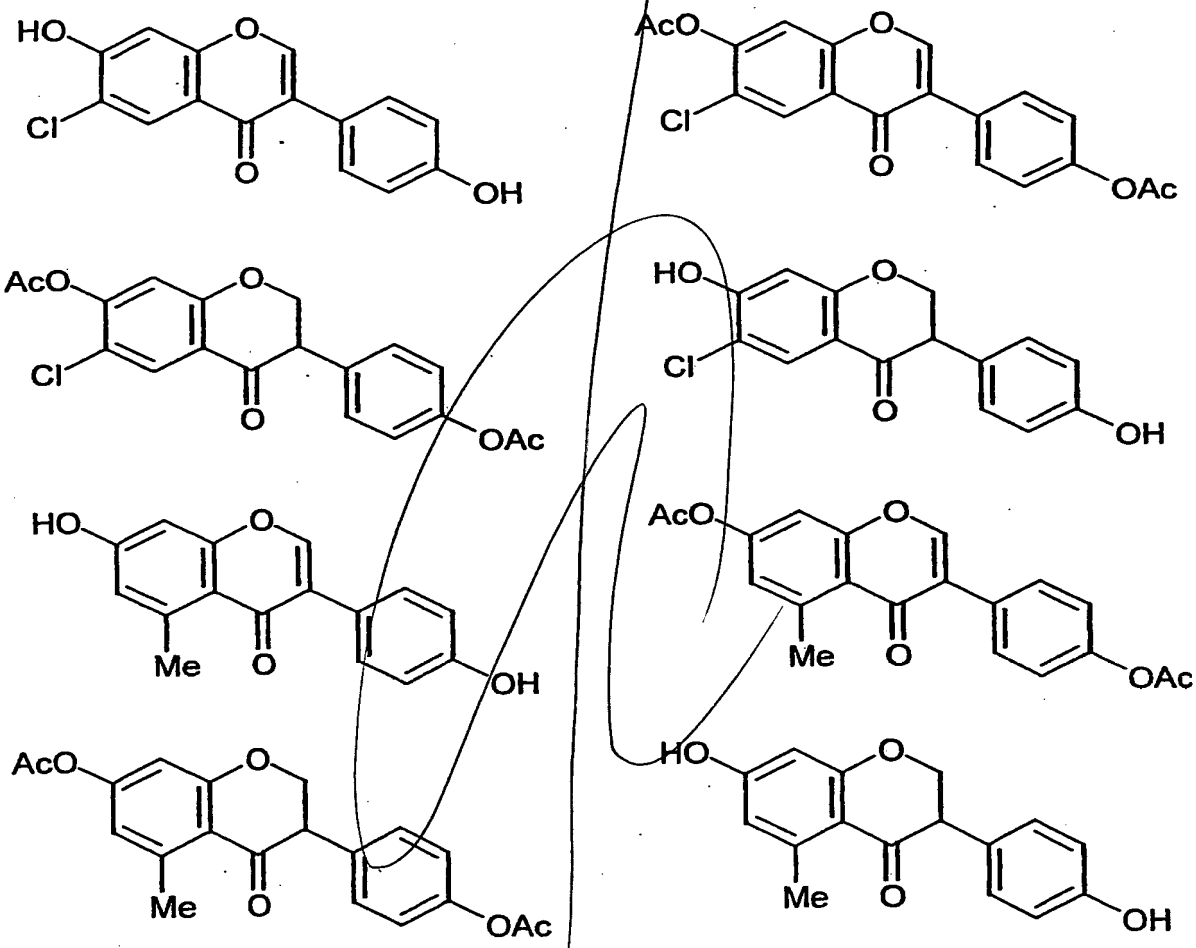
Y is

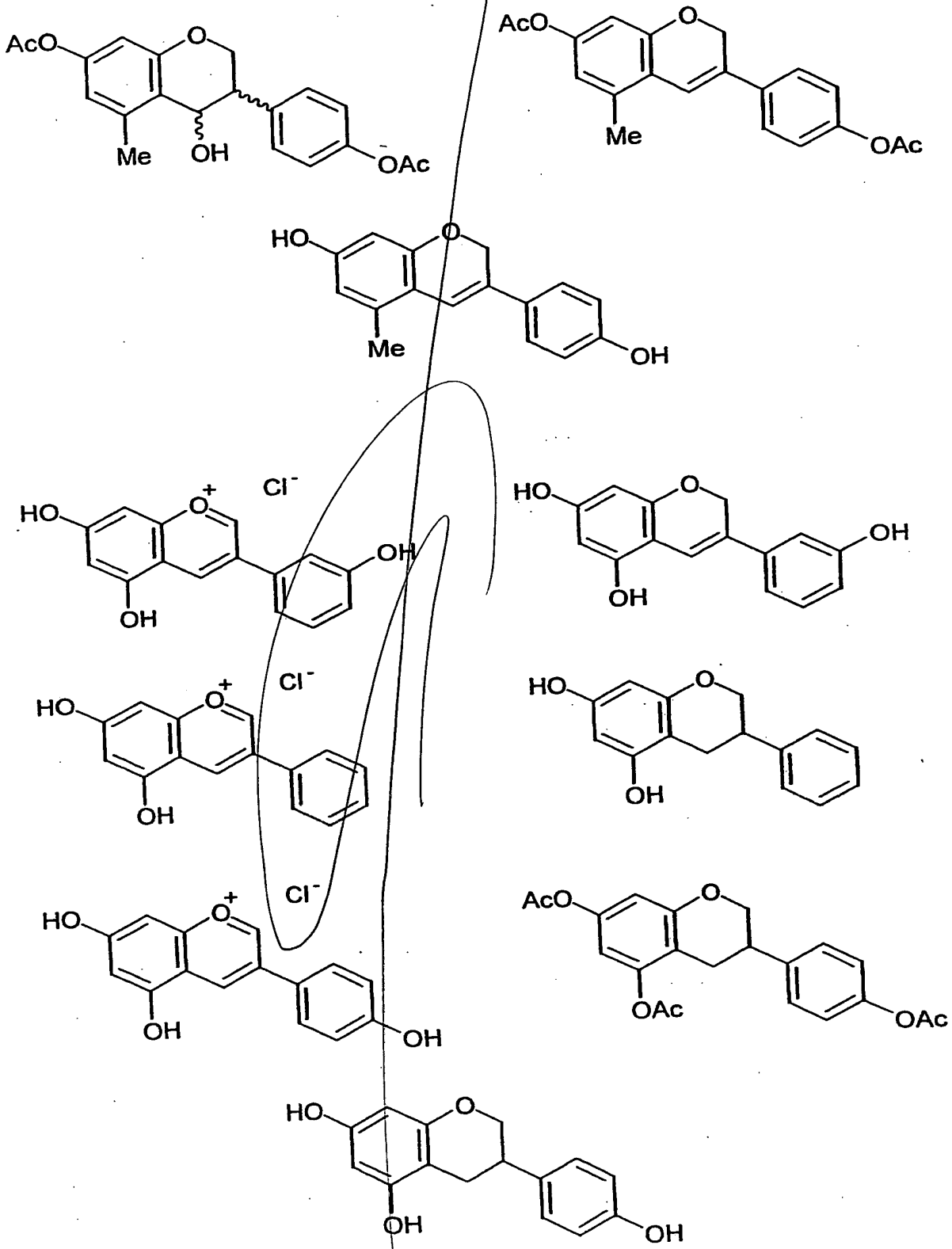


wherein

R_{14}, R_{15} and R_{16} are independently hydrogen, hydroxy, OR_9, $OC(O)R_{10}$, $OS(O)R_{10}$, CHO, $C(O)R_{10}$, COOH, CO_2R_{10}, $CONR_3R_4$, alkyl, haloalkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, thio, alkylthio, amino, alkylamino, dialkylamino, nitro or halo.

3. A compound of formulae I as defined in claim 1 or of formula II as defined in claim 2 selected from the group consisting of:




AcO
O
Me
OH
OAc
AcO
O
Me
OAc
HO
O
Me
OH
HO
O+
Cl-
OH
OH
HO
O
OH
OH
HO
O+
Cl-
OH
HO
O
OH
HO
O+
Cl-
OH
OH
AcO
O
OAc
OAc
HO
O
OH
OH

4. A method for the treatment, prophylaxis, amelioration, defence against, and/or prevention of menopausal syndrome including hot flushes, anxiety, depression, mood swings, night sweats, headaches, and urinary incontinence; osteoporosis; premenstrual syndrome, including fluid retention, cyclical mastalgia, and dysmenorrhoea; Reynaud's Syndrome; Reynaud's Phenomenon; Buergers Disease; coronary artery spasm; migraine headaches; hypertension; benign prostatic hypertrophy; all forms of cancer including breast cancer; uterine cancer; ovarian cancer; testicular cancer; large bowel cancer; endometrial cancer; prostatic cancer; uterine cancer; artherosclerosis; Alzheimers disease; inflammatory diseases including inflammatory bowel disease, ulcerative colitis, Crohns disease; rheumatic diseases including rheumatoid arthritis; acne; baldness including male pattern baldness (alopecia hereditaria); psoriasis; diseases associated with oxidant stress including cancer; myocardial infarction; stroke; arthritis; sunlight induced skin damage or cataracts (the "therapeutic indications") which comprises administering to a subject a therapeutically effective amount of one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II.

5. Use of one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II for the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment, amelioration, defence against, prophylaxis and/or prevention of one or more therapeutic indications according to claim 4.

6. Use of one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II in the treatment, amelioration, defence against, prophylaxis and/or prevention of one or more therapeutic indications according to claim 4.

7. An agent for the treatment, prophylaxis, amelioration, defence against and/or treatment of the therapeutic indications according to claim 4 which comprises one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II either alone or in association with one or more carriers or excipients.

8. A therapeutic composition which comprises one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II in association with one or more pharmaceutical carriers and/or excipients.

9. A drink or food-stuff, which contains one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II.

10. A microbial culture or a food-stuff containing one or more microbial strains which microorganisms produce one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II.

11. One or more microorganisms which produce one or more compounds selected from formulae I and II.